



The RYERSON
POETRY
CHAP-BOOKS



Sonnets for
Youth

By
FRANK OLIVER CALL

*This is Chap-Book Number One Hundred and Six.
Cover Design by J. E. H. and Thoreau MacDonald.*

OF THIS EDITION OF *SONNETS FOR YOUTH*
BY FRANK OLIVER CALL, TWO HUNDRED
AND FIFTY COPIES ONLY HAVE BEEN
PRINTED. THIS CHAP-BOOK IS A PRODUCT
OF THE RYERSON PRESS, TORONTO, CANADA.

*Copyright, Canada, 1944, by
The Ryerson Press, Toronto.*

FRANK OLIVER CALL, Professor of Modern Languages, University of Bishop's College, Lennoxville, P.Q., is the author of *In a Belgian Garden* (1916), *Acanthus and Wild Grape* (1924), *Blue Homespun* (1924), *The Spell of French Canada* (1926), *The Spell of Acadia* (1930) and others.

The Ryerson Poetry *Chapbooks*

Sonnets for Youth

By Frank Oliver Call

CREDO

WE WALKED together down a village street
 Of straggling white-washed houses. Gray and old
 The church tower rose against the copper gold
 Of a late autumn sunset. Beat on beat
 Across the darkening sky the angelus rolled
 Three strokes—Youth, Life, and Death. Austere, complete,
 The credo of the bells in triumph tolled
 Like a voice mocking,—Youth and Love are fleet.
 In the cold stillness as the bell's voice died,
 Triumphant, mocking still, your eyes were turned
 To mine for a brief moment. Something cried
 From that black silence, then a new star burned
 Far in the west and warmed the autumn chill,
 Like fires of home beyond the darkening hill.

WILD SWAN

THE POOL lay black within the silent wood,
Like polished onyx in an inlaid frame
Of silver birches, mountain ash like flame,
And dark green spruces. Strangely mute you stood,
Slender and youthful, the swift-coursing blood
Tinging your cheeks. Across the dark pool's breast
A wild swan glided from its hidden nest
And floated in the shadows. From that flood
Of infinite beauty, like a soul parched and dry,
I drank—woods mirrored in the pool, wild swan,
And youth's brave, eager turning to the dawn
Of beckoning life. Then came a startled cry
Of sudden wonder from your lips, as on
White flashing wings the swan rose to the sky.

WHITE HYACINTH

WE PUT the dog-earned lesson-book away,
Pondering the classic story. Pale and dead
Before our eyes young Hyacinthus lay
Upon the Spartan shore. From stains of red
Beside the blue Ægean, star on star,
White hyacinths sprang up to greet the dawn,
Each leaf a cry of pain, re-echoing far
A voice that mourned for beauty past and gone.
You paused a moment as you left the room,
Bending a slender form above a bowl
Of white and blue where hyacinths were abloom.
Once more the far Ægean seemed to roll
On flower-clad shores, but brought no cry of pain,
For Hyacinthus breathed in life again.

OPTIMIST

YOU WATCH, your dark eyes wide in youthful wonder,
Life's tragic comedy, and ponder why
The lives and loves of men are torn asunder,
And beauty only dawns to fade and die.
For you the road is never steep or dreary
That leads the tired wanderer to his rest;
Old feet go journeying homeward slow and weary,
But yours are set to climb the mountain's crest.
Your smooth face fades: I see as in a glass,
Weary and old and mumbling as they go,
Faust, Omar Khayyam, Housman, Hardy pass.
Then through the dark I see your young eyes glow,
Reflecting all the glory yet to be,
Like dawning stars above a storm-swept sea.

AUTUMNAL

UPON the hills, the poplars, bending double,
Become mad dancing partners of the wind;
Down in the valley, fields of frost-browned stubble
Grow white beneath the snow, and yellow and thinned,
The dead leaves fall from boughs that creak and rattle
To moulder on the frozen ground beneath;
It is the clash and clang of the old battle
Between the marshalled hosts of life and death.
And through the storm that round us whirls and rushes,
"Listen," I call—"a voice that stills the fear
And fret of human hearts; a song that hushes
Our age-old questionings." "I only hear,"
Comes back your answer, "far-off chimes that ring
The wild, mad music of eternal spring."

PHILOSOPHY

WE FOLLOWED the trails of old philosophy,
Worn trails half buried beneath ancient dust,
We threaded paths of new psychology—
Why men and women hate and love and lust.
I, with the doggedness of middle age,
Upheld the tottering fane of beauty and truth
Where my old gods lay hidden. You, the sage
Of twenty years, the golden scorn of youth
Poured forth upon old creeds. At last you said,
“They bring us no adventure, no high quest.”
Each word was like a burning torch that shed
Light in the dark. I saw youth climb the crest
Of toppling crags, and strong in love and faith,
Go blithely singing down the ways of death.

A ROMAN BOWL

YOU LIFTED from its shelf a Roman bowl
And held it to the firelight. “Strange,” you said,
“The hands that formed it twenty centuries dead,
And still the work lives on. Is life the whole,
Or is it but a slowly-opening door?”
Youth looked on life with clear, unflinching eyes
And flung the eternal challenge to the skies
That made no answer. Then you turned once more
Towards the fragile bowl of pale, green glass
To which the buried years had lent those gleams
Of opalescent light—a craftsman’s dreams
Of beauty after ages come to pass.
The firelight cast a halo round your head,
The bowl gleamed brighter, purple, gold and red.

SCEPTIC

I

"IS THERE a God that rules this tiny world,
Or cares what men may do with their little lives?"
The challenge of the ages thus you hurled
At truth's dark door. An eagerness that strives
To plumb the ultimate deep spoke in each word.
"We stumble down the ways where others fell,
Mumbling old prayers and think a god has heard
If we, by chance, find heaven instead of hell.
And war lives on while youth grows stark and cold,
Or maimed and broken crawls away to die,
Amid the praises of the wise and old—
The chosen of a god that sits on high,
Watching the hideous pageant as it creeps
Down the great chasm where the darkness sleeps."

II

Youth does not change though ages pass away;
A threadbare creed is but its broken toy.
Upon the table where your school-books lay
Stood the white statue of a Grecian boy
Whose body, scarcely lovelier than your own,
Summoned its strength to hurl a spear afar,
While you with javelin words assailed the throne
Of a dead god upon a burnt-out star.
The sunlight floated through the silent room
Tense and almost tangible; its beams
Hung golden chains between that perfect bloom
Of ancient beauty and youth's burning dreams;
You held the young Greek warrior in the light.
"Beauty is truth," you murmured, "Keats was right."

FAITH

AWAYSIDE shrine where three gaunt human forms,
Broken and bleeding on three crosses sung,
Rose from the drifted snow. The western storm's
Black veil was rent in twain, and boldly flung
Across white level fields, a long trail glowed
Crimson and gold beneath the wintry sky;
A habitant came down the snow-bound road;
He bowed before the calvary and passed by.
From that stark picture of the dying Christ
I looked to where the warm red sunset burned;
But youth beside me, brave to keep the tryst
Even with death and darkness, slowly turned
Away from friendly fires of western skies
And faced the dark to see the new dawn rise.

FROZEN GARDEN

HER GARDEN stands today as once it stood
Frozen in memory within her brain;—
Green terraces invaded by a flood
Of drifted scilla stars like sapphire rain,
Frail hyacinths as blue as southern seas,
Bold perfumes smiting like a trumpet's blare,
White icy trilliums beneath dark trees,
A static bird song hanging in the air.
Frozen and deathly still as flowers of glass
Red passionate tulips stand, as on that day
She lifted sorrowing eyes to see him pass,
And heard the sound of marching die away;
Only one word, one voice, one quickening breath
Can wake this garden from its dream of death.

IMMORTAL

THOUGH now your strong young body, where our eyes
Once looked on beauty for a fleeting hour,
Upon some far-off field forsaken lies,
Vanquished and beaten down beneath the power
Of conquering Death, and though in vain we seek
Across the ultimate dark to grasp your hand,
Or touch your silent lips and pallid cheek,
Still Faith's embattled towers firmly stand.
Yes, let Death have his hour to work his will,
And change your strong lithe body into mould,
The breath you breathed will somewhere linger still,
The eternal universe your clay enfold;
For Life is victor over mould and rust,
And Love at least as strong a thing as dust.

PRAYER

SAVE ME from easy beauty, god that watches
Over the artist who, with groping hand,
Reaches out into the void and snatches
Some shred of loveliness—a gleaming brand
Plucked from the dark. Away from flower-starred meadows
And sunlit waters let me turn my eyes,
To seek the austere beauty of blue shadows
Drifting across the red of sunset skies.

Let me find beauty in bare boughs that shiver
On wind-swept hilltops where no bird may hide,
In hard green ice beside a silent river
With hungry waters gnawing at its side,
Till strong as love of life shall grow my faith
That burning beauty lights the face of Death.

The Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books

Lorne Pierce—Editor

Number

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. THE SWEET O' THE YEAR* [1925] | <i>Sir Charles G. D. Roberts</i> |
| 70. THE THOUSAND ISLANDS | <i>Agnes Maule Machar</i> |
| 81. REWARD AND OTHER POEMS | <i>Isabel McFadden</i> |
| 84. EXCUSE FOR FUTILITY | <i>Charles Frederick Boyle</i> |
| 89. CALLING ADVENTURERS! | <i>Anne Marriott</i> |
| 90. OUT OF THE DUSK | <i>Mary Matheson</i> |
| 91. TWELVE POEMS | <i>Nathan Ralph</i> |
| 92. THE ARTISAN | <i>Sara Carsley</i> |
| 93. EBB TIDE | <i>Doris Ferne</i> |
| 94. THE SINGING GIPSY | <i>Mollie Morant</i> |
| 95. AT SUMMER'S END | <i>Amelia Wensley</i> |
| 97. SEEDTIME AND HARVEST | <i>Barbara Villy Cormack</i> |
| 100. SALT MARSH | <i>Anne Marriott</i> |
| 106. SONNETS FOR YOUTH | <i>Frank Oliver Call</i> |
| 107. THEY SHALL BUILD ANEW | <i>Austin Campbell</i> |
| 108. RHYTHM POEMS | <i>Sister Maura</i> |

Fifty Cents

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 7. THE LOST SHIPMATE | <i>Theodore Goodridge Roberts</i> |
| 33. LATER POEMS AND NEW VILLANELLES | <i>S. Frances Harrison</i> |
| 56. THE ROSE OF THE SEA* | <i>Lionel Stevenson</i> |
| 87. DISCOVERY | <i>Arthur S. Bourinot</i> |
| 88. THE PIONEERS AND OTHER POEMS | <i>H. Glynn-Ward</i> |
| 96. LITANY BEFORE THE DAWN OF FIRE | <i>Ernest Fewster</i> |
| 99. FOR THIS FREEDOM TOO | <i>Mary Elizabeth Colman</i> |
| 101. BIRDS BEFORE DAWN | <i>Evelyn Eaton</i> |
| 102. HEARING A FAR CALL | <i>M. Eugenie Perry</i> |
| 103. JOURNEY INTO YESTERDAY | <i>Irene Benson</i> |
| 104. REARGUARD AND OTHER POEMS | <i>Elsie Fry Laurence</i> |
| 105. LEGEND AND OTHER POEMS | <i>Gwendolen Merrin</i> |

Sixty Cents

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 77. SONGS | <i>Helena Coleman</i> |
| 83. LYRICS AND SONNETS | <i>Lilian Leveridge</i> |

Seventy-five Cents

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 49. THE WANDERER AND OTHER POEMS | <i>Nathaniel Benson</i> |
| 52. THE NAIAD AND FIVE OTHER POEMS* | <i>Marjorie Pickthall</i> |
| 57. THE BLOSSOM TRAIL | <i>Lilian Leveridge</i> |
| 82. THE MUSIC OF EARTH | <i>Bliss Carman</i> |

One Dollar

*Out of Print

